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Society of the Culinary Spectacle: An Analysis of the Mediated Relationship Between Female Celebrity Chefs And the Kitchen

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SOCIETY OF THE CULINARY SPECTACLE
An Analysis of the Mediated Relationship Between Female Celebrity Chefs
and the Kitchen

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of Vassar College
in partial fulfillment
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Introduction

The kitchen is a point of convergence for countless conflicting discourses; it is simultaneously practical and popular, at the focus and at the periphery of culinary routine, an area for both reinforcing and subverting gender roles. Its centrality in everyday life makes it a universal point of interest, a fact that has been thoroughly exploited in the media. While food and cooking have always been awarded a certain amount of attention, the level of public exposure to these seemingly fundamental phenomena has skyrocketed since the mid-twentieth century. The rise in the popularity of food media exemplifies the pursuit of self-identity and distinction through the production and consumption of images, which has subsequently resulted in the creation of a new, postmodern identity: that of the “foodie.”

The food-centric, mediated arena created around these individuals provides a powerful lens with which to examine contemporary gender constructions. Regardless of the medium employed, the types of food information being spread have always been divided by the gender of the chef in question, and women’s relationship with the kitchen has always been particularly tenuous (de Solier 2013:129). On one hand, the kitchen has traditionally functioned as a domestic space of suppression and confinement, and, on the other, it is one of self-expression and liberation. The former conception has remained dominant in gender and culinary discourse over time, and the antiquated belief that “women cook with the heart, [and] men cook with the head – because women have heart and men have brains” has persisted as a feature of consumer-held and media-reinforced notions of how gender is represented in food and cooking (Gender Confusion 2009).

However, a general in shift in attitudes surrounding the relationship between women and the kitchen has occurred during the greater part of the last century, which can be attributed to the popularization of broadcast media. Peaking with the advent of television in the 1950s, new media forms not only allowed for the promulgation of cooking instruction on a previously unimaginable scale, but also solidified the concept of cooking as more than just a domestic task. Imbued with the cultural capital that was previously only accessible through *haute cuisine*, home cooking was reframed in such a way that it became synonymous with pleasure and leisure, further cementing its position in general discourse.

The driving forces behind this cultural movement are celebrity chefs; the overexposed figures awarded the task of molding the tastes of their insatiable audiences. Print media and radio allowed for the like of Paul Bocuse and Auguste Escoffier to gently mold the tastes and trends of the foodie niche, but the visibility of culinary personalities was exponentially magnified by their appearance on screens. As a direct result of television, the modern celebrity chef appeared in the mid-twentieth century in the form of Julia Child.

Child's impacts on viewers' relationship with cooking have proven to be the most enduring. Although not the first chef to grace American airwaves, Child ultimately redefined the cultural power and influence that could be wielded from behind a stove. Her television series, *The French Chef* (1963-1973), which inaugurated the flood of food-related programming, revolutionized the role of the woman in the kitchen while simultaneously refreshing and refining the American palate. Moreover, Child provided both entertainment and instruction during her

twenty-minute segments, a formula that proved central to captivating audience attention and that continues to be employed in contemporary broadcasting. Her meteoric success can be attributed to her embodiment of the conflicting characters of both the highly skilled chef and the motherly, charismatic cook, and, as a result, has been canonized in both professional and domestic settings.

The “cook” and “chef” tropes that Child effortlessly combined have evolved divergently under the influence of the hyper-mediated, visual environment. After the conclusion of *The French Chef* in the early 1970s, the demand for cooking shows increased dramatically, and, in tandem with the commercialization of cable broadcasting created more opportunities for the formation of celebrity chefs. To appeal to the widest audience possible and ensure their longevity, individuals have to conform to rigid network and audience expectations associated with gender. While male characters, such as Gordon Ramsay and Bobby Flay, are authoritative and aggressive in the televisual kitchen, their female counterparts behave more demurely, in the spirit of the passive housewife. These regressions were encapsulated in the founding of the Food Network in 1993, whose triumph is firmly rooted in selling the personalities of its chefs, as opposed to instructing viewers on how to cook.

The channel’s method is based on the creation of a set of types, which are simple and straightforward: the working woman pressed for time, the busy housewife, and “the girl next door.” Molded into these generic personalities, Food Network’s women highlight the fact that broadcast media thrives on the enforcement of gender binaries. A close viewing of popular Food Network

representations of the cook trope, Ree Drummond (*The Pioneer Woman*), and the chef trope, Anne Burrell (*Secrets of a Restaurant Chef*), shows that the commercial celebrity chef is contained by the fulfillment of the traditional roles that are encoded in these two terms. In exchange for comprising their personalities, both Drummond and Burrell have captivated audiences and maintained network support, which is further shown by their lasting presences in American living rooms.

However, the continuous diversification and accessibility of media forms, in tandem with the ever-strengthening influence of the foodie, have spawned an informal breed of culinary star. No longer reliant on the medium of television, women have been able to construct multifaceted identities, predominantly on their own terms and regardless of their levels of expertise, and subsequently scrambling the gendered codes emphasized in broadcast media. An investigation into the personas of Molly Yeh and Christina Tosi, who respectively fulfill the cook and chef types, demonstrates the effects of expanding media forms on perceptions of women in culinary settings. Unbound by network-imposed limitations, Yeh and Tosi have achieved celebrity chefdom through the display of a mosaic of skills, which further illustrates the ways in which the fluid media environment can be used to assert the presences of independent women in the culinary world. While the kitchen and all acts associated with it are still compromised by consumer-held notions of gender roles and entertainment, the media proves to be a tool that is both helping to ease these divides.

Chapter One: Julia Child

When you flip anything, you really... you just have to have the courage of your convictions.

- Julia Child, *The French Chef* (1963)

Julia Child is the archetypal celebrity chef. While she was certainly not the first to attempt to teach America how to cook, Child's career was defined by her personal crusade to enliven her viewers' palates. Her presentation of cooking as a pleasurable and creative activity serendipitously aligned with various changes in the social and mediated environments; the milieu afforded by shifting post-World War II attitudes towards the meaning of "women's work" within the domestic sphere, in tandem with the introduction of television and the rising importance of productive leisure and media consumption for identity construction, created a unique context that directly contributed to Child's success. Through an examination of her first television program, *The French Chef* (1963-1973), it becomes apparent that Child's multidimensional personality provided the key to her widespread and ever-enduring audience appeal; her ability to inhabit the roles of experienced instructor and accessible entertainer solidified her places in both culinary and media discourses, as well as formally sparked the phenomenon of the celebrity chef by presenting cooking as a pleasurable act and respectable career choice.

Section One: The Rise of the Foodie and Attendant Phenomenon of the Celebrity Chef

In the postindustrial era, when the "self is increasingly in focus," individuals are being tasked with creating their own identities (de Solier 2013:1; Beck and Beck-

Gernsheim 2001:22). No longer determined by the traditional markers of status and wealth, these processes of self-definition have become intertwined with commodity culture; identities are molded through consumption and “productive leisure” (de Solier 2013:1; Gelber 1999:1-2). According to Gelber, “industrialism quarantined work away from leisure that made employment more worklike and nonwork more problematic... [thus,] the ideology of the workplace infiltrated the home in the form of productive leisure” (ibid). Therefore, “productive leisure,” which is defined as the acquisition and expression of non-occupation related knowledge, has become a key facet in establishing self-identity (de Solier 2013:1). In a culinary context, for example, actively learning the techniques to properly poach an egg through engagement with various materials carries more cultural capital than possessing the skill to do so. The knowledge behind the perfect poached egg is neither important for the average career nor crucial for survival, and the practice therefore qualifies as an act of productive leisure.

This obsession with food consumption in all of its forms has evolved into an identifiable identity; the “foodie,” a term first coined by Harpers & Queen in 1982, is defined by the magazine as a “‘cuisine poseur’ who use[s] sophisticated culinary consumption as a means of social distinction” (de Solier 2013:7). According to de Solier, foodies self-identify as being at the forefront of gastronomic knowledge, and their desire to constantly expand their culinary education, which directly feeds into their public presences, is the dominant force behind the evolution of the food media industry (ibid:31,33).

Long before the advent of television in the 1950s, which made the cultural capital encoded in food production and consumption accessible to the masses, multiplicitous engagement with it was already tied to processes of identity making. The media has emerged as a primary facilitator of this obsessive relationship between individuals and what they consume. Food's material culture has become inseparable from the media being used to proliferate it; the low costs and wide reach afforded by evolving forms of social engagement make it an ideal means with which to dictate tastes and trends, consequently bestowing this images with more importance than the actual food itself (Stringfellow et al. 2013:78-9). By gaining access to the culinary capital afforded through conspicuous interactions with food, individuals acquire status and power through these values that are being "assigned and reassigned [on] a constant and ever-changing basis" (Naccarato and Lebesco 2012:2). Distinguished by necessity or luxury, those with the capacity to consume outside of a sustenance-centric context used the various ways that food was being presented to them as a tool for constructing a sense of self (Parasecoli 2008:2). Concern no longer lies with production, but rather the messages encrypted in its multimediated consumption. Behind this prioritization of appearance over substance are celebrity chefs, the public personifications of superior culinary knowledge and expertise.

In the words of Davis and Seymour, as quoted by Boyle and Kelly, "as societies become more 'mediated,' so the elevation of public figures is increasingly linked to their ability to generate a positive public profile through the mass media" (2010:343). As a result, the visibility of both men and women in the kitchen has been

dramatically amplified in Western culture (Cairns et al. 2010:591). In the words of Levi-Strauss, as quoted by Stringfellow et al., the “chef is a cultural agent of social order” (2013:80). From their mediated podiums, they are able to instruct consumers on culinary tastes and techniques, cementing their places in popular culture. In tandem with technological advancements, the hypermediated environment has taken the fame of these purveyors of gastronomic knowledge to new heights, resulting in a society completely dazzled by celebrity chefs (Rousseau 2012:xix).

However, regardless of the medium being employed, the types of food information being spread have always been thoroughly divided by the gender of the celebrity chef in question (de Solier 2013:129). Entrenched in the widely held conceptions that men cook for pleasure and leisure, while women do so out of necessity and duty, this profession has been perpetually restricted by the limitations imposed on gender (Cairns et al. 2010:593; de Solier 2013:129). Druckman (2010) condenses this relationship into the equation: “*woman : man as cook : chef.*” Semantically, the “cook” and the “chef” have always existed as separate entities, each connoting a differing level of expertise. According to Druckman, this fundamentally stems from “chef” being “the shortened versions of chef de cuisine and relates directly to the *métier* of food preparation. [One] can only become a chef after former culinary training or apprenticeship” (ibid). In contrast, “cook” is applied more broadly to individuals who prepare food in both domestic and professional settings, tied to notions of provisioning and leisure (ibid; Naccarato and Lebesco 2012:22).

Television functions as a medium for both easing and emphasizing the semantic gender distinction between the chef and the cook. The early stages of

culinary programming were defined through these rigid types; the first televisual gastronomes, James Beard and Dionne Lucas, aligned themselves with these stereotypes (*see figs. 1&2*) (Collins 2009:2). While the former explored his passion for food through his aptly titled series, *I Love to Eat* (1946-1947), the latter focused on the instruction of the contemporary housewife in *The Dionne Lucas Show* (1947-1956) (*ibid*:27; *ibid* 2012:1). These performances highlighted not only the lust for food in its spectacularized form, but also the degree to which the cook and chef tropes dictated the ways in which men and women were televisually depicted; audiences wanted to be awed by the former and easily replicate the dishes of the latter. United in their ability to provide both information and entertainment, Beard and Lucas illustrate the ways that gender defined the chef/cook dichotomy, as well as performer/viewer relationships.



fig. 1: James Beard



fig. 2: Dionne Lucas

Section Two: Julia Child and the Context that Fostered the Inception of the Modern Celebrity Chef



fig. 3: Julia Child on the set of *The French Chef*, c. 1963

The traits of the chef and cook successfully converged in the character that Julia Child presented in *The French Chef*. Child began her career while living as a housewife in France, and, inspired by the cultural cuisine, pursued a professional education at the infamous Le Cordon Bleu cookery school (Benson-Allott 2010:83). In collaboration with Simone Beck, she produced *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961) in an effort to spread her passion and knowledge of the subject to American readers (Reardon 2005:62). To supplement the cookbook, Child partnered with WGBH-TV to create *The French Chef* (1962-1973), which illustrated the recipes and techniques featured in the written text (ibid:69). As previously demonstrated, Child was not the first to attempt to reinvent the American relationship with food. While Beard and Lucas were among the first to engage with cooking under the gaze of the

camera lens, their presences in contemporary discourse pale in comparison with Child's; her lasting success can predominantly be attributed to the context in which she constructed her persona (Pollan 2009). A series of events, including the shifting of the definition of "women's work," the increasing presence of the food industry in the home, and the overwhelming cultural obsession with France allowed for Child to become firmly embedded in both the culinary and the mediated discourse (ibid; Parkhurst Ferguson 2014:94).

The milieu of mid-century America was chaotic and contradictory, defined by the desires to embrace both modernity and tradition. From a gendered perspective, Child emerged at a time when women were being bombarded by conflicting advice on how to be progressively domestic. The decades leading up to the 1960s were defined by fluctuating periods of stability and turmoil; marked by World War I, and followed by the Great Depression and World War II, attitudes regarding gender and work were constantly being redefined (Collins 2009:2). In times of crisis, women were expected to fill the occupational vacancies left by men, while concurrently continuing to sustain their romanticized roles as mothers (Cairns et al. 2010:593). In the words of Marcel Boulestin, French chef and author, "I can imagine no more charming a picture than that of the wife seeing to the perfection of the evening meal and the husband on his way home from work looking forward to it. Happiness sits smiling at their table" (Strauss 2011:24). As demonstrated by Boulestin's quote, a woman's primary duty was to care for her family, and cooking was a central means with which to do so. However, as the demands of modernity conflicted with

domesticity, it became increasingly difficult for women to fulfill both traditional and progressive roles.

As a result, the food “convenience” industry was born to help normalize gender roles, as well as to maintain the idealized façade of cooking from “scratch” (de Solier 2013:132). Emphases continued to shift in favor of efficiency and speed, indicative of the overarching American mindset that was, and, to a degree still is, defined by the attitude that “quantity reigns triumphant over quality” (Parkhurst Ferguson 2014:23). Aided by processed foods “colonizing the American kitchen and diet,” what qualified as “cooking” was stretched to accommodate the pre-prepared goods being marketed to consumers, with the attraction being to able to use the time that was saved in the

kitchen to pursue more practical and profitable ventures (Pollan 2009). The pursuit of the American Dream displaced the importance of the dinner table in domestic life, and as pre-prepared meals and appliances infiltrated the home, Americans

were becoming increasingly unmotivated to spend more time in the kitchen than necessary (*see fig. 4*). Eminent food writer M.F.K. Fisher attributed the flavors in twentieth-century American cooking to the “tin cans” in which it was contained;



fig. 4: Kenwood Appliance Advertisement, 1960s

food was reduced to a vehicle for sustenance as opposed to one for enjoyment (Parkhurst Ferguson 2014:100).

Onto the scene burst Julia Child, an ungainly, breathy personality who remains one of the most notable culinary figures of all time. In the vein of transforming the American relationship with food and cooking, Child reintroduced the love of cooking purely for the sake of it, and the idea that although it was traditionally relegated a domestic task did not mean that it had to continue to be seen as such (ibid:81). According to Parkhurst Ferguson, Child was among the first to fully grasp the concept that instruction could be a form of amusement, and used the attention that Americans awarded her as a way of bringing new ideas and techniques into the sheltered domestic space (2014:111). From her kitchen at WGBH, she took the intimidating concept of French cuisine and made it manageable for her television audience, as well as empowered the home cook by equating cooking with pleasure, a skill that could be refined to benefit the user (ibid:91).

Aside from the fundamental appeal of the moving image, the series also provided a welcome distraction from the tumult of the mid-century. Russell Morash, a producer at WGBH, provided further insight into the atmosphere that contributed to its appeal: “You have to remember the early sixties. Broadcast was a medium of mayhem. Assassinations, war, riots. You turned on your set, and that was what you saw. But if you changed the channel you could watch a soufflé being made” (Rousseau 2012:36).

While *The French Chef* provided a light-hearted alternative to the political chaos, it also acted as a platform from which Child challenged gender binaries. As a

credentialed chef and housewife, she was able to naturally combine the conflicting tropes of “chef” and “cook.” A close viewing of “The Potato Show,” the twenty-second episode in the series, provides a means with which to more thoroughly examine the formula that so captivated American viewers. Her twenty-minute treatment of potatoes is among the most infamous in the series, and portrays the chef at her very finest. The combination of instructions, advice, and gaffes makes it a thoroughly entertaining, yet informative, experience, as well as provides viewers with a glimpse into the foundation of culinary broadcast media.

Section Three: “The Potato Show”

The scene opens with a close-up of Child’s hands roughly chopping potatoes into identical chunks. With shaking hands, she slices an already-peeled potato in two before placing the cut sides down on the wooden cutting board. Using a precise allumette cut, she deftly chops the potato



fig. 5: Child demonstrates her allumette cut

into thin, identical slices (*see fig. 5*). When her voice cuts in, the knife almost slips, putting her fingers in jeopardy; she manages to recover quickly, and in her signature shrill and breathy manner, reminiscent of Monty Pythonesque falsetto, expounds: “don’t you ever get awfully tired of just baked, boiled and mashed and fried potatoes? Well, if you do, tune in on us!”

After introducing the focus of the episode, the camera slowly zooms out to accommodate the opening credits and theme; all the while, Child cuts her potatoes and prepares her workspace in anticipation of the next half an hour (*see fig. 6*). She



fig. 6: Program title

provides a fun fact about potatoes – they were considered poison until Louis XVI received a bouquet of potato flowers in 1771, making them instantly en vogue – before launching into the menu for the show: *gratin de pomme de*

terre dauphinois (“all it is is sliced potatoes cooked in milk and butter, and all they take is about twenty-five minutes”), potato casserole with sausages, a mashed potato pancake (“a simply minded, but awfully good dish”), and raw, grated potato pancakes with cream cheese, eggs, and ham. While obviously French-inspired, it is clear that her dishes have been adapted for her American broadcast audience.

Implicitly alluding to the postmodern trend of the separation of the processes of production from consumption, Child makes sure to not use pre-prepared ingredients. She is genuinely concerned with the education of her viewers, and guides them through every step with her signature awkward humor. In the words of Michael Pollan, “... while Julia waited for the butter foam to subside in the sauté pan, you waited, too, precisely as long” (2009). She demonstrates the correct way to hold a potato for most efficient slicing (“when you come to the end, be careful not to slice off your thumbs”), and recommends using a grater to achieve the same effect. Although obviously flustered, a fact that she remarks upon on throughout the

episode (“I’ve got my heat on so high that I’m just getting boiled!”), she manages to keep her audience captivated.

The French Chef is further constructed on Debord’s concept of the spectacle. Behind Child’s meticulous coiffure and the judiciously chosen camera angles, an army of production assistants worked tirelessly to help create this image of the seasoned, relatable woman who maintained control of her kitchen in spite of disaster. In an undated photograph, taken by her husband, Paul Child, the chef is seen reaching for a dish being held up to her by a man crouched beside her (*see fig. 7*). Obscured by the counter, five people are clustered around her legs, making sure Child has access to everything she needs. All the while, her gaze remained fixed on the camera that was trained to capture her every move, thereby allowing her to sustain the illusion that she was on par with the average housewife.



fig. 7: Child and her production crew

From the perspective of a contemporary spectator, the quality of the production is incomparable to the modern standard; the dialogue is riddled with mistakes, blatantly unscripted and unedited; Child fumbles the execution of her dishes; she sweats profusely. However, these imperfections are key contributors to Child's personality. Her credentials give her authority, her gender makes her approachable, and her informal attitude in the kitchen makes her accessible to her audience.

During one of the most endearing segments of the episode, Child attempts to flip a dinner plate-sized potato pancake, and provides a commentary while undergoing the endeavor (*see figs. 8a-f*):

I'm going to try and flip this over, which is a rather daring thing to do... When you flip anything, you really... you just have to have the courage of your convictions, particularly if it's sort of a loose mass like this... oh, that didn't go very well. See, when I flipped it, I didn't have the courage to do it, the way I should've. But you can always pick it up if you're alone in the kitchen. Who is going to see?

As Pollan states, "Julia's kitchen catastrophe was a was a liberation and a lesson [for a generation of women eager to transcend their mothers' recipe box]: 'The only way you learn to flip things is just to flip them!'" (*ibid*). To further reinforce her confidence in her viewers, Child concludes every episode with her trademark statement, "*Courage*, and *bon appétit*! This is Julia Child." The *courage* that Child wishes her viewers is exactly what she provides them with; she gives spectators the confidence "not only to cook the world's most glamorous and intimidating cuisine," but to break with culinary tradition and adapt in the face of potato-related catastrophe (*ibid*).



fig. 8a: The potato pancake



fig. 8b: Child readies herself to flip the pancake



fig. 8c: Potato pancake, mid-flip



fig. 8d: Child rescuing the remnants of her incomplete flip



fig. 8e: Child doctoring her damaged pancake



fig. 8f: Close-up of Child covering up the catastrophe

Section Four: The Celebritization of Julia Child

Child is still a major contributor to the contemporary culinary discourse. In the forty years following the conclusion of *The French Chef*, she continued to feature in television programs, including *Baking With Julia* (1996-1999) and *Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home* (1999-2000), while her cookbooks remained at the top of countless bestseller lists (Rousseau 2012:35). Her enduring success was dependent on the fortuitous context in which she began her culinary crusade; had she attempted a similar endeavor at practically any other point in time, the outcome would not have been as revolutionary; indeed, Child does not conform to the modern, societally held ideal of stardom by any stretch of the imagination (Wurgaft 2005:123).

The unfiltered and unedited persona that Child presented in her long-running series provides a stark contrast to the carefully manipulated images of today's chefs. By resisting the move from public to commercial television, Child maintained her commitment to craftsmanship and the pleasure that could be derived from cooking, subsequently preserving the integrity of her brand (ibid). Unlike Martha Stewart, the face of a global media empire, and Giada De Laurentiis, who boasts impressive cookware and prepared foods line, Child avoided the frills that accompany contemporary celebrity (ibid). Her characteristics gave her a unique relationship with her fans; "one wanted to learn from Julia, not to possess the things that she seemed to possess, not to *be* her" (ibid).

While contemporary chefs function as "makers and marketers of commodities," Child has only been turned into one after the fact (Rousseau

2012:57). Chefs and foodie admirers alike have canonized her, and her legacy has been spread across a variety of media platforms; from parodies on *Saturday Night Live* to having her kitchen posthumously installed as a permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution, her presence across popular culture continues to flourish (see figs. 9&10). In the words of one of her biggest fans, Julie Powell, Child's counterpart in Nora Ephron's *Julie & Julia* (2009): "there's nothing wrong with [Julia] – nothing... she's perfect" (Benson-Allott 2010:85).



fig. 9: Dan Ackroyd as Julia Child on *Saturday Night Live*, 1978



fig. 10: Julia Child's kitchen at the Smithsonian Institution

The aforementioned film captures the presence that the chef still has in contemporary media discourse. *Julie & Julia* chronicles Julie Powell (Amy Adams), an aspiring writer and amateur cook, and her attempt to replicate every recipe in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* over the course of a year (see fig. 11). The Julie



fig. 11: Promotional poster for *Julie & Julia*

segments are interspersed by those of Julia's (Meryl Streep, *see fig. 12*) life in France, highlighting similarities between the two; as portrayed by the film, while both are happily married, they feel as if they lack greater purpose, one that they ultimately find in cooking. Powell lives in a culinary world that Child helped to create, "one where food is taken seriously, where chefs have been welcomed into the repertory company of American celebrity

and where cooking has become a broadly appealing *mise-en-scène* in which success stories can plausibly be set and played out" (Pollan 2009). Her example solidifies the idea that cooking can be more than just a leisure activity, a skill that can jumpstart or define a career. While Powell's accomplishments are markedly smaller than those who bask in the spotlight of television and other serial media forms, the notion that cooking yields celebrity remains an overarching theme.



fig. 12: Meryl Streep as Julia Child

Culinary celebrities continue to follow Child's example (Wurgaft 2005:121). The standards that she established for passion and risk-taking in the kitchen have evolved divergently; on one hand, *The French Chef* instigated a change in the American relationship with cooking and foreign cuisine, and on the other it has spawned a cult-like following of "cooking" programs. For women in particular, celebrity chef status in the contemporary media environment is earned more through presentation and personality than culinary skill. In particular, Food Network programming provides a particularly vivid lens to analyze the gendered tensions within the food media arena.

More than fifty years after Child's televisual debut, she still remains among the few public figures that have been able to combine the characteristics of the chef and the cook. In the decades following *The French Chef*, these two personalities have, once again, regained their polarized relationship. The steady mainstreaming of food media over the course of the last half-century has been accompanied by a flattening of the celebrity chef, forcing the character to be molded into generic types established by broadcast media corporations; these include the stay-at-home domestic, the entertaining doyenne, and the "career" woman. As a result, the precedent set by Child for cooking shows to be a combination of both instruction and entertainment has dramatically shifted in favor of the latter. To ensure the popularity of their programming, television networks have thoroughly generalized and spectacularized their offerings; the attraction of these shows is no longer the food that is being prepared, but, rather, the individuals that have been awarded the task of its preparation.

Chapter 2: The Modern Celebrity Chef on Television

They say that stars give you somebody to dream about... [the] screen idols are immanent in the unfolding of a life as a series of images. They are a system of luxury prefabrication, brilliant stereotypes of life and love. They embody one single passion only: the passion for images, and the immanence of desire in the image. They are not something to dream about, they are the dream.

- Jean Baudrillard (1998:56)

In response to the mounting demand for food media, the Food Network was founded in 1993 to provide viewers with constant access to their televisual idols (Collins 2009:173). Centered on the idea that the channel was, in the words of Erica Gruen, former president and CEO of the network, “here to put great personalities on air,” television chefs were over-simplified to appeal to the widest audience possible. Food Network stars provided at-home viewers with the liberty to forge intimate, yet imagined, connections with them by presenting heavily edited characters that can be tailored to suit the personal preferences of audience members (ibid:175).

Thus, the “cook” and the “chef” have remained dominant basic characters in the Food Network kitchen, with women almost exclusively relegated to the former and men to the latter. While the likes of Gordon Ramsay and Bobby Flay iron-fistedly rule over their sets, exuding authority and confidence, their female counterparts are limited to more passive and inoffensive mannerisms. This gender divide is illustrated through close viewings of Ree Drummond’s *The Pioneer Woman* (2011-) and Anne Burrell’s *Secrets of a Restaurant Chef* (2008-). Through a comparison of the two, it becomes apparent that although Drummond and Burrell have achieved celebrity chef status, their mediated representations are very much

tailored to the narrow standards set by the Food Network, which ultimately highlighting the skewed gender relations being reinforced by broadcast media.

Section One: The Evolution of the Food Media Environment

The fetishization of food, as well as those engaged in its production, has become a driving force behind the evolution of the celebrity chef. While food media provides no physical nourishment, voyeuristic gratification has proved to be an appropriate replacement for the physical substance (Hansen 2008:52). Cooking shows are no longer a means of instruction and entertainment, but rather complex “cultural products encoded with meaning that help [shape] audience’s identities, lifestyles, and relationships with consumer culture and one another” (Wright and Sandlin 2009:402). In accordance with the “do-it-yourself” movement, individuals are constantly looking to the figures that broadcast media has installed as authorities on self-improvement; therefore, the parasocial relationships that are formed between the star and the audience provides yet another incentive. The televisual medium fosters a connection between the chef and the viewer, creating the illusion that the former is intimately concerned with the wellbeing of the latter (Malene 2011:14).

Female celebrity chefs are the public faces of this resurgence of domesticity. By virtue of the gendered relationship between food and the self, they fill the roles of mentors and close friends, doling out helpful kitchen tips and inside jokes. Following Child’s example, contemporary televisual chefs gently guide their audiences through performing tasks more efficiently and skillfully. In the decades

after *The French Chef*, this method of audience engagement has spawned an industry solely focused on instructing Americans not only how to become better cooks, but how to lead better lives as well.

In answer to the growing demand for food media, the Food Network was founded in 1993, and has subsequently become a household staple across America; as of 2010, the channel, which provides endless access to food-related programming, was available to 87 million households (Collins 2009:5; Mitchell 2010:524). Both a result and promulgator of foodie culture, the Food Network has found its success in exploiting gendered culinary stereotypes (ibid). This imbalance can be assessed in terms of the cook and the chef; the vast majority of the network's representatives are female, who comply with these enduring, narrow culinary tropes (ibid). With less than a third of the channel's programs hosted by classically trained chefs, a fraction of who are female, the remaining majority conforms to the domestic cook persona (ibid:525).

In the context of the Food Network, women inhabiting the cook persona retain domestic characteristics: those of mothers, wives, and nurturers who gently provide helpful suggestions (Platzer 2011:12; Scholes 2008:50). The new era of television cooks have befriended their viewers by welcoming them into their "home" kitchens and sharing culinary and personal secrets with them. The trope encompasses the overly enthusiastic, calorie-oblivious mother *fig.* (Paula Deen, *see fig. 13*), the accessible and attractive "girl next door" (Giada De Laurentiis, *see fig. 14*), and the cost-effective and time-efficient modern woman (Rachel Ray, *see fig. 15*), among other audience-relatable characters (Druckman 2010).



fig. 13: Paula Deen



fig. 14: Giada De Laurentiis



fig. 15: Rachel Ray

These personalities, while superficially diverse, are connected by their lack of professional training and well as malleable personas, aspects that are central to their mass-appeal. From Giada to Rachel, the Food Network brand of “cook” presents an idealized combination of femininity and “hominess” (Hewer and Brownlie 2009:484). Like Child before them, the channel’s cooks are not elitist, and present the dream of finding joy in a necessary part of daily life as a one that is easily attained by following their examples. Rachel Ray, for example, “is a quintessentially self-made American success story. Small-town girl and specialty food buyer hits upon the idea to teach ‘30 Minute Meal’ classes as a way of moving merchandise. The classes lead to TV appearances, which lead to cookbooks and a Food Network gig, which lead to guesting on ‘Oprah’ and subsequent total media domination” (Rousseau 2012:65). Ray’s path to fame is fortuitous, an accidental derivative of her business savvy. Despite her success, she presents a grounded persona to her audiences, openly admitting that her rise to fame is rooted in luck: “[She] has no formal culinary training, and a brash willingness to embrace pre-

washed produce and canned broth. She has boasted that she's completely unqualified for every job she's ever had (ibid)."

In contrast, the Food Network chef proves to be a much more difficult and defeminizing role; women are expected to eschew stereotypical female roles in favor of more "masculine" ones to more properly exert their authority in the kitchen (Scholes 2008:50). The channel "consistently portrays its men as serious chefs, experts, adventurers, and competitors (Druckman 2010)." Hyper-masculinized, they are established as idols and authority figures; in *Food 911*, Tyler Florence rescues housewives from their kitchen emergencies (*see fig. 16*), while Bobby Flay participates in *Iron Chef* "Throwdown" challenges (*see fig. 17*), and Guy Fieri travels across the United States in his trademark sunglasses and muscle cars in search of the best undiscovered eateries (*see fig. 18*) (ibid).



fig. 16: Tyler Florence



fig. 17: Bobby Flay



fig. 18: Guy Fieri

The domineering chef style stems from the restaurant kitchen environment. Historically organized hierarchically, with the *chef de cuisine* in command and newcomers and women located at the bottom of the pyramid, the professional

kitchen is likened to a battleground (ibid). To rise in the ranks, women must simultaneously combat the limitations predisposed on their gender and outperform their male counterparts. In Druckman's words, "the kitchen is only a place where the strong survive. Competition is constant. Women are not often welcome there – not because they can't cook but because they're not taken seriously as competitors" (ibid). As a result, women feel pressured to defeminize themselves to eliminate the handicaps imposed on gender.

Anne Burrell serves as a definitive case study for the trope of Food Network chef; with her spiky hair and muscular appearance, she presents a more androgynous *fig.* (*see fig. 19*). In contrast, Ree Drummond, a cook on the channel, radiates the sweetness associated with femininity (*see fig. 20*). Through engagement with their interpretations of garlic-mashed potatoes, it becomes apparent that the Food Network has constructed its cast on the fulfillment of these basic character types. Furthermore, it serves to underscore the fact that gender stereotypes very much influence the gaze of broadcast and spectator communities alike, as well as alludes to the ideological tensions that exist between progress and regress.



fig. 19: Anne Burrell



fig. 20: Ree Drummond

Section Two: The Food Network Cook – Ree Drummond



fig. 21: Ree Drummond in her home kitchen

Ree Drummond, the star of *The Pioneer Woman* (2011-), provides an archetypal example of the Food Network-branded celebrity cook. Relatively new in terms of achieving celebrity cook status, Drummond provides a prominent example of the merging of antiquated and modern notions of cookdom; on her personal website, Drummond describes herself as “a moderately agoraphobic ranch wife and mother of four” who uses cooking as a means to ease the transition from “spoiled city girl to domestic country wife” (thepioneerwoman.com). She has given up the role of the educated, working woman in favor of becoming a wife and mother, and in turn has found her own success among pounds of butter and stainless steel kitchen appliances.

Drummond embodies the persona of the stay-at-home mother. She primarily cooks to provide for her family, and has serendipitously found a career in it. By all accounts, Drummond should have been better suited to doling out advice to 1950s era housewives, but instead has found her place in the contemporary culinary

environment. A close viewing of a clip of Drummond making mashed potatoes to accompany a steak dinner serves to illustrate her embodiment of the role of dutiful wife and mother, as well as how this functions to establish her brand in terms of societally held ideals of simplicity, surplus, and comfort. Meat and potatoes are the staples of the American dinner table, and countless cooks and chefs have replicated its preparation on television screens. And yet, Drummond manages to present it in such a way that it still proves to capture her viewers' attention. Her style of cooking can be labeled as "comfort food" on several levels; she is heavily influenced by American tradition, her meals are substantial and calorie-oblivious, and she makes sure that every act is imbued with love and care for those that she is feeding.

In this particular episode, Drummond wears the uniform of the Food Network cook: she is outfitted in a bright blue, embroidered, V-neck tunic, which has been carefully coordinated with her accessories (*see fig. 22*). The era of aprons, buttoned blouses, and pearls has long passed, and has been replaced by more "provocative" choices (Louie 2007). Simon Doonan, former creative director of Barneys New York, refers to this cleavage-bearing trend as "updated wench chic" (*ibid*). As quoted by Louie, Doonan credits the V-neck as a contributor to the gender divide: "they have to exude competence, but they can't be frowsy. Everyone has to have a little bit of hootchy, but the trick is not



fig. 22: Medium shot of Drummond, NB: V-neck

to have it go too far, because if it becomes too overly sexual, issues of hygiene come into play” (ibid).

Indeed, Drummond has mastered balancing the connotations of the V-neck with her role as dutiful housewife. Although she wears the standard-issue style of shirt, she manages to maintain her modesty; her top is loose, yet flattering, and hints at her femininity without being too revealing. Drummond’s careful wardrobe choice grounds her relationship with the viewer in friendship, a reminder that she is a committed wife and mother, as well further distancing herself from the possibility of exuding Nigella Lawsonsque sex appeal (*see fig. 23*).



fig. 23: Nigella Lawson offering the voyeur a bowl of cherries



fig. 24: Drummond reaching for butter, NB: wedding band

This wholesome image is further reinforced by the camera, which frequently captures shots of her left hand, on which a sizeable wedding band is displayed (*see fig. 24*). The segment opens with a close-up of her hands as they mash the potatoes in a large, red, cast-iron pot, her diamond glinting in the set lights. Looking up from her work with a charming smile, Drummond explains to her audience in a thick,

southern drawl: “I’m movin’ forward with the big dinner; I’m going with the meat and potatoes plan. I’m making some roasted garlic mashed potatoes (pronounced *puh-tay-tuhs*) to go with the beef I’ll make.” With another winning grin and a shake of her trademark tomato-red waves, Drummond returns her gaze to her work.

Having already peeled, chopped, and boiled her potatoes, Drummond operates under the assumption that her audience possesses a fundamental level of kitchen knowledge; as a busy wife and mother, catering to other busy wives and mothers, she cannot afford to waste time. Wielding a masher, she sets to work on her tubers, smashing them over low heat. Drummond’s viewer-friendliness is enforced by her use of standard kitchen tools; to break down the potatoes, she uses a pot and masher, which are guaranteed to be in the majority of her audience’s kitchens (*see fig. 25*).



fig. 25: Extreme close-up of Drummond mashing her potatoes

After reaching her desired consistency, Drummond announces that she is ready to add “the good stuff.” The “good stuff,” in homage to Child, turns out to be three sticks of butter, which, by her logic of needing to feed seventeen people, “isn’t really that much.” As is made evident by Drummond’s casual descriptions, it is clear that she does not want to unnecessarily complicate her instructions. She uses language that is completely accessible to whomever is watching; her aim is to present her recipes as ones that are easy to follow and recreate in home kitchens, further cementing her role as a helpful friend sharing her favorite kitchen tips.

Returning to the clip, Drummond introduces her secret ingredients: three sticks of butter and a package of softened cream cheese, which “acts as a binder and gives them a great texture” (*see fig. 26*). She then proceeds to add a cup of half-and-half (“again, remember, seventeen people!”) and then a splash of heavy cream (“because I just can’t help myself, and it makes them delicious!”). The “splash” quickly becomes “a splash and a half,” her directions steadily becoming more dependent on subjective and imaginary measurements.



fig. 26: Sticks of butter waiting to be incorporated into the mash

Drummond’s casual approach to incorporating ingredients is representative of her persona. Her kitchen is an unstructured, non-judgmental space, without an emphasis on exactness and perfection. She is more focused on creating a hearty meal for her loved ones than counting calories; she acknowledges the startlingly large quantities that she is using in her potato dish, but her desire to provide her family and friends with pleasure trumps everything else.

Resuming her mashing, Drummond is laboring under the strain of incorporating the added ingredients. But, as she assures her audience, “it’s pretty much instant” due to the pre-softened dairy products. After a few moments, Drummond declares that her potatoes “are looking... just marvelous!”

To complete her dish, she walks over to her oven, where she “grab[s]” the garlic that she had already roasted. She “loves mashed potatoes,” she explains, “but roasted garlic mashed potatoes are just over the top.” In cuts a montage of how to roast garlic (“really a cinch!”). Through a series of extreme close-ups of her hands, which once again feature her wedding ring, Drummond demonstrates how to cut the tops off of garlic bulbs; she does so without fanfare, slicing off the useless parts with



fig. 27: Drummond's garlic preparation

deliberate chops (*see fig. 27*). She carefully transports the useful portions to a circular pan coated with olive oil, where the decapitated garlic bulbs are then drizzled with even more oil. Satisfied, she gives them a sprinkling of salt and pepper before covering the pan with tinfoil, instructs her viewers to roast the garlic at 375° for approximately forty-five minutes.

Jumping back to the present, Drummond is shown squishing the browned garlic cloves into the pot of mashed potatoes (“it’s so soft that all I have to do is give it a little squeeze, and the roasted cloves just fall right out!”) Once again assuming that her viewers will take issue with the sheer quantity that she is using, she assures them that roasting made the garlic flavor more subtle, and the end result “won’t be too overpowering.” Trading her masher for a spoon, Drummond incorporates them into the potato mash in a sweeping, folding motion (*see fig. 28*).

After several passes, she exclaims: “Oh my goodness gracious... these just look... phenomenal!” The music swells, a twangy Southern melody of banjos and fiddles. She heaves up her heavy pot filled with mashed potatoes and transfers her them into a clean dish, revealing the rest of her plan in the process (“once I get all the potatoes in the pan, I’m

going to dot the top with a little extra butter. It can’t hurt!”)

Using six tablespoons of butter, she inserts chunks into the potato mass, assuring viewers that when they are warmed up



fig. 28: Drummond's final stirs of her mashed potatoes

in the oven, “even more good things are going to happen.”

Drummond presents cooking as a simple, relaxed act which functions as a vehicle for love. In letting viewers watch her caring for her own family, she instructs her viewers on how to better care for their own. As a cook, she gives her audience a standard to strive for, and does it in such a compelling fashion that the idealized image of domesticity that she presents seems perfectly attainable. While Drummond as an undeniably likable character, she is also a generic one. By virtue of being one of many cooks in the Food Network compendium, Drummond has been reduced to just another engaging personality in the channel’s arsenal.

Section Three: The Food Network Chef – Anne Burrell



fig. 29: Anne Burrell in her Food Network kitchen

The female cook brand has established a collective standard in relation to one another; in the male-dominated chef arena, Anne Burrell is among the few combatting culinary gender stereotypes. One of the few professionally trained women featured on the network, Burrell has been a programming staple for over a decade. In her official Food Network biography, she is lauded as having “worked at some of the top restaurants in New York, studied the culinary landscape and traditions of Italy, and battled alongside Mario Batali as his sous chef on Food Network’s *Iron Chef America*,” even in her own biography, Burrell’s achievements are overshadowed by a male chef (foodnetwork.com). *Secrets of a Restaurant Chef* is not mentioned until later, and is touted as a program “that makes restaurant dishes accessible and makes concise, easy-to-master techniques available for the at-home cook” (ibid). Thus, her accomplishments as Batali’s assistant are presented as more notable than her personal ones; from Food Network’s perspective, higher value is placed on a lesser position under a male chef as opposed to than that of a head female chef.

Visually, Burrell's image deviates from that of the stereotypical chef; in this particular clip, and in accordance with the Food Network-mandated dress code for its cooks, Burrell wears a hot-pink V-neck and a pair of polka-dotted shorts that would be better suited for a golf course (*see fig. 30*). With her hair styled in its trademark platinum porcupine coiffure and wearing little makeup, she gives her audience the impression that "real" chefs are unconcerned with their physical appearance. To remain competitive with men, she has sacrificed the long hair and makeup associated with femininity, aligning herself with the idea that female chefs must possess masculine characteristics to be taken seriously.



fig. 30: Burrell peeling garlic, NB: attire



fig. 31: Burrell's opening title

Heralded by a montage of images of her laughing in her professional kitchen, Burrell introduces her take on mashed potatoes under the banner "Secrets of a Restaurant Chef" (*see fig. 31*). The episode begins in the professional setting before seguing into the domestic one, a reminder that Burrell's reach extends beyond the home kitchen. While leaning against the counter, Burrell nonchalantly states, "restaurant mashed potatoes... *sigh*. That's really when you need to go full-on fat. It's basically cream and butter held together by a little potato." She says this matter-of-

factly, dismissively acknowledging the calories that are a part a high-quality potato dish to her image-conscious audience.

Once in her home kitchen, Burrell launches into action. The chef has no time to show her audience how to chop potatoes, an act that would normally be tasked to an individual ranked lower in the restaurant hierarchy. Therefore, the process is omitted entirely. With her tubers already simmering away in a pot of water, she launches into the task of peeling garlic without fuss, picking up a knife and pounding away within the first moments (*see fig. 32*). The soundtrack is intense, a pseudo-



fig. 32: Burrell forcefully pounding her garlic

heavy metal piece that is synched with the noise of her smashing. Instead of engaging viewers with light conversation, she is focused on imparting her instructions: “I am going to add

some super-secret flavor weapons. I am going to add garlic, and my good old friend in the kitchen salt that makes everyone taste better.” In a few swooping motions, she has peeled her garlic and dropped it straight into the pot with the potatoes.

Burrell shares a special relationship with food, which is asserted by her chef status. However, although she possesses a well-rounded culinary vocabulary by reason of her background, she uses informal language that puts the audience at ease. Burrell frequently personifies her ingredients and equipment, by calling her stove a “guy” and salt “an old friend,” for example. By lessening the intellectual culinary gap

between her viewers and her self, Burrell is able to more thoroughly engage them in her potato mashing process.

“Some people, when they make garlic mashed potatoes, will roast the garlic first. I prefer to really streamline that whole operation and just cook the garlic right with my potatoes.” To illustrate her point, she unceremoniously plops the cloves directly into the steaming pot. During this explanation, Burrell is preoccupied; she rarely makes eye contact with the camera, focused on moving around her kitchen and salting the water. She is as focused on saving time as her working audience is, with no gaps between her narration and demonstration: “I’m doing a high-seasoning: plenty of salt in my water, because remember, our potatoes are going to absorb in this water and taste like nothing.” She takes a spoonful of the water and tastes it to gauge its salinity level; dissatisfied, she adds another hearty pinch of salt.

Time jumps ahead, and Burrell is shown poking at her potatoes with a fork (*see fig. 33*). “[The fork],” she explains, “should really slide in and out easily. That’s what the phrase ‘fork-tender’ means.” She wiggles her eyebrows suggestively, further emphasizing the sexual innuendo that she has introduced into testing the doneness of her potatoes. In this instance, Burrell uses



fig. 33: Burrell testing the doneness of her potatoes

her femininity to her advantage; through this brazen display of flirtation, she briefly abandons her businesslike chef persona to facilitate a more intimate interaction with her audience.

She drains her potatoes with a vigorous shake, focused on getting the potatoes back into the pan as soon as possible (“to avoid sticky, starchy mashed potatoes).” In the time that the cameras were switched off, she has been joined by a legion of restaurant-grade appliances, which she introduces with great enthusiasm: “soooo we have arrived at the moment of my favorite piece of kitchen equipment.



fig. 34: Burrell demonstrating proper food mill use

This is the food mill... we use this in my restaurant all the time for a million different purposes... all the good things go through, and all the bad things stay up top” (see fig. 34). Until this point, Burrell’s actions have remained accessible to the home cook. With her dramatic presentation of the appliance, she assumes that her viewers have a limited knowledge

of food mills, let alone have access to one. Through this act, Burrell aims both to instruct and to reassert her superiority; she remains relatable up to a certain point, but then presents an unattainable bit of knowledge that distinguishes her both from her spectators and the Food Network cooks.

With her allotted time rapidly drawing to a close, Burrell spoons her potatoes into a dish and sets a pat of butter on top, declaring that she is: “just going to let my potatoes hang out in a really warm oven... so when I’m plating my chicken, I’ve got my potatoes ready... this is just like we do it in the restaurant!” Satisfied with her finished product, she slides the dish into a preheated oven before shutting the door with a triumphant smile. Not only has she successfully taught her audience to make garlic mashed potatoes in under four minutes, but she has also managed to keep them captivated for the same amount of time.

Throughout the clip, Burrell’s demeanor is brisk and to the point; she does not have the time or the patience like “The Pioneer Woman.” And yet, she still manages to share commonalities with her audience to a certain degree. Although she is a trained professional, she is able to keep her relationship with food more relaxed through the use of informal language and playful banter. Through profession and execution, her rapport with her dishes is serious, which she has made an effort to lighten for the sake of her audience.

Despite the limitations being exerted over her by gendered expectations, Burrell has managed to create her own place among the Food Network’s troupe of male chefs. The character that she presents is both professional and endearing, having mastered her role as performer. The longevity of Burrell’s personality is a testament to her skill in front of the camera, as well as to the gradual changes occurring in the broadcast environment.

Section Four: The Gender Divide

It's really only the press who seem to feel that having a restaurant and a vagina is some kind of bizarre ownership situation.

– Chef Amanda Cohen
(McKeever 2013)

In November 2013, *TIME* magazine released an issue entitled, “The Gods of Food.” The publication defined these culinary deities as individuals and groups that have “their own roles in working the magical thinking and eating that reaches our dinner tables;” *TIME* identified thirteen deserving of this lofty mantle (Chua-Eoan 2013). Of those, four of the individuals named were women, none of whom were chefs. The list included Aida Battle (a coffee producer), Amrita Patel (Chairman of India’s National Dairy Development Board), Vandana Shiva (environmental activist and author), and Ertharin Cousin (head of the United Nations World Food Programme) (ibid). While the magazine-proclaimed food “goddesses” were more involved with issues concerning ethical and sustainable consumption, the “gods” were overwhelmingly defined by their skills in the kitchen.

The cover of the issue features David Chang (founder of the Momofuku restaurant group) and Alex Atala (executive chef of D.O.M., *Restaurant* magazine’s fourth best restaurant in the world) resting their heads against that of Rene Redzepi (chef and co-owner of Noma, *Restaurant* magazine’s best restaurant in the world) (see fig. 35)(ibid). In a statement prior to the issue’s release, editor Howard Chua-Eoan explained the decision to feature these chefs on the cover: “they are three of the best and best known chefs in the world – and also best buds. Their openness

reflects the new, more open world of haute cuisine, a positive step away from the secretive and egoistical world of old" (*TIME* 2013).



fig. 35: TIME, 11/19/2013

Critics were quick to voice their frustration with the length of this “positive step.” In a follow-up article written for *TIME*’s blog, Belinda Luscombe asked prominent female figures why the gender disparity was still so visible in the culinary world. In response, Alice Waters, chef, author, and pioneer of the locavore movement, stated: “women are just not thought of as capable as men. Maybe a few in the pastry department rise up but that’s not even considered an important part of the meal” (chezpanisse.com; Luscombe 2013). Amanda Cohen, chef and owner of Dirt Candy, a restaurant known for its inventive vegetarian cuisine, in New York City, attests that blame lies with the media: “I haven’t encountered any sexism in the kitchen. The media chooses not to write about women. If there’s a male chef and there’s a female chef, the journalist will always choose to talk about the male chef first” (ibid).

To further explain the media’s tendency for grossly underrepresenting women, Waters references the cook/chef distinction. As she states, “when you see a woman in the kitchen you think it’s a domestic thing and when you see a man in the kitchen it’s a creative thing” (ibid). This sentiment is echoed by Chua-Eoan: “I think it reflects one very harsh reality of the current chef’s world, which unfortunately has been true for years: it’s still a boys’ club” (Dixler 2013). Thus, if culinary prestige is being measured by gender-biased standards, women are at a disadvantage. The sexist imbalance is underscored by the persistent use of gender markers: as women are labeled “female chefs,” whereas men are simply “chefs.” “Female” qualifies the chef in question as an exception, unable to meet the standards of the “chef” as such.

They are already being distinguished from their male counterparts in language, making gender separation in the kitchen a logical derivative.

“The Gods of Food” serves as a tangible example of the ways in which the media and consumers contribute to this reinforcement of gender divide. Further emphasized in the previous analysis of Drummond’s and Burrell’s Food Network personas, mainstream broadcast media provides a platform for the creation of a certain kind of celebrity – one that is attractive, relatable, inoffensive, and plays directly off of widely held perception that women who work in the kitchen are align with one of two predetermined types. While the context surrounding food has evolved in the decades since Child reigned over the airwaves, progress has been slowed by the likes of Drummond and Burrell, who are content with inhabiting the cook and chef stereotypes in exchange for celebrity status; they have achieved conventional fame with their audiences, and it has been at the cost of conforming to perceived ideas about women’s place in the culinary sphere.

Chapter Three: Women in the New Culinary Media Environment

As the deterritorialization of persons, images, and ideas has taken on new force... more persons throughout the world see their lives through the prisms of the possible lives offered by mass media in all their forms.

- Arjun Appadurai
(Parasecoli 2008:3)

Although Drummond's and Burrell's brand of celebrity is dependent on their degree of televisual exposure, the ever-diversifying media environment has produced a new, informal breed of culinary stars who are able to more directly shape their own personas and more effectively subvert the limitations imposed on gender. Digital technologies have exponentially amplified the scope of food media, and shifted the definition and complexity of the celebrity chef as a result. More than ever, it is now possible for individuals to insert themselves into the culinary discourse. Facilitated primarily by the internet, women have been afforded the ability to establish themselves more independently than ever before, unbound by the broadcast-media-imposed gender restrictions. No longer limited to their representations on television screens, individuals are able to create more complex and personal images through the widening range of resources being made available to them. Digital lifestyle media, encompassing blogging, online news outlets, and Instagram, among other forms of social media, has become a primary tool with which to disseminate culinary cultural capital, as well as for establishing ideals for individuals to strive to incorporate into their daily lives.

Molly Yeh and Christina Tosi conform to the cook and chef tropes, respectively; the former has no professional culinary experience, and the latter holds a degree from the French Culinary Institute (*see figs. 36&37*)(Witchel 2011). Both have been able to construct public personas that acknowledge these labels; however, they have done so primarily on their own terms, and as a result have garnered fame from the diversifying foodie audience. Through Yeh's personal blog, *mynameisyeh*, and Tosi's status as owner and head chef at Momofuku Milk Bar in New York City, the women have sparked sustainable careers that have been documented across digital media. Analysis of their respective mediated personalities shows the ways that new media is enabling women to achieve success more independently, influenced less by the rigid gender expectations imposed by previous forms.



fig. 36: Molly Yeh



fig. 37: Christina Tosi

Section One: The Impacts of Digital Media on the Definition and Scope of Celebrity

The internet has dramatically intensified the idea that cooking can be used as a tool for self-definition and promotion (de Solier 2013:4). Aside from redefining the ease and range with which culinary information can be circulated, it has directly impacted methods of identity formation (ibid). Promulgating the trend of general unconcern for learning how to better navigate the kitchen, engaging in productive leisure pursuits continues to be a primary concern of food media consumers (ibid; Rousseau 2012:x). As result, cooking is exalted as a craft that “carries meaning far beyond the limitations of the kitchen” (de Solier 2013:4). Social media has emerged as primary tool for both promulgating stardom and appeasing the ravenous foodie audiences.

The parasocial relations that television fostered between culinary mavens and their audiences has progressed to extremes; consumers are now allowed instant access to the celebrity of their choice, becoming more intimately acquainted with their idols through photographs on Instagram and updates on blogs and Twitter (Stringfellow et al. 2013:78). This blurring of boundaries between the media producer and consumer has had two major effects on the definition of the contemporary culinary celebrity: the criteria required to be one and the increased difficulty in maintaining audience attention. The cacophony created by competing voices across digital platforms has made it virtually impossible for an individual to establish an enduring media presence. Being Julia Child is no longer enough; multimedia mastery is a requirement of contemporary fame.

The individuals who have been the most successful in creating a lasting presence are those who have been able to combine their creativity and personality to establish unique, eye-catching brands. Women have primarily taken advantage of this opportunity; no longer forced to conform to the cook/chef mold, the multimedia environment allows them to assert more of their own agency. Molly Yeh, who began her culinary career as a food blogger, has gradually expanded her media presence through the use of social media, whereas Christina Tosi, a professionally trained chef, exerts a similar presence across media platforms. Both women approach their projects creatively and unconventionally; play is their prime directive. While their celebrity influence can be perceived as more niche-oriented, they are imbued with a higher level of cultural capital as a result.

Section Two: The New Cook - Molly Yeh

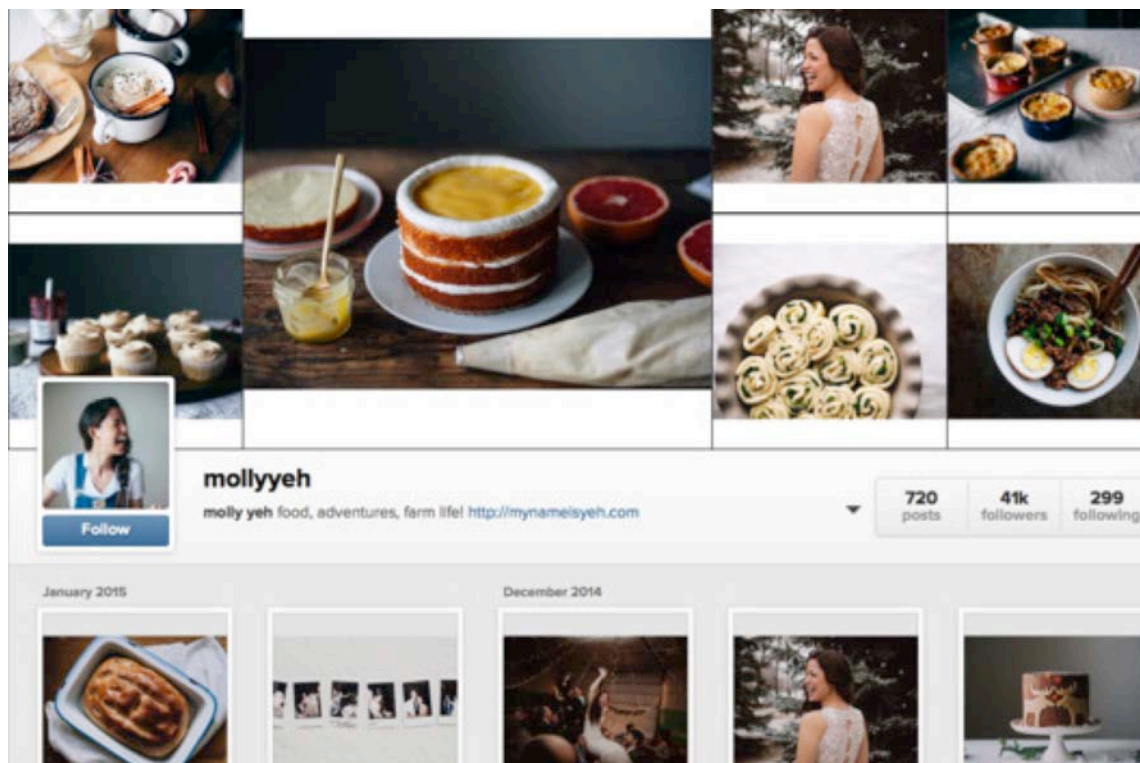


fig. 38: Molly Yeh's Instagram page

The first thing that viewers notice about Molly Yeh (pronounced “yay!!!!!!!!!!!!!! [exclamation points are optional]”) is her attitude; her megawatt smile is instantly endearing, and her bubbly personality is infectious, even in her written words (mynameisyeh). mynameisyeh was launched in 2009 as a tool for documenting Yeh’s life, and has since evolved into her career. A vibrant hodgepodge of text and images, mynameisyeh has gained a devoted fan base over the years, which in turn has earned Yeh coverage and columns in various food media outlets, as well as foodie accolades, being named a finalist in *Saveur*’s Fifth Annual Best Food Blogs competition among them. Inspired by her self-proclaimed passion for food and Chinese-Jewish heritage, Yeh reinvents classic recipes to reflect her background and ingenuity, including pretzel potstickers, red bean and oatmeal hamantaschen, and latke pumpkin pie.

Over the course of the last few years, Yeh’s blog has focused on her transition from Brooklyn-based percussionist to North Dakotan farmer. Yeh left her life in New York City for the sake of her fiancé (now husband), a fifth-generation Norwegian-American farmer, Nick Hagen, whom she addresses as “eggboy.” A Juilliard-education xylophonist, she has managed simultaneously to carve out places in both Grand Forks, North Dakota, and in the foodie world; she has enthusiastically adapted to rural life, as well as maintained her sense of individuality through the curation of her blog. As she states in her personal biography, she has found the farm life “pretty swell: i get to make big tasty farm lunches, dream up names for future chickens, and pickle everything without getting labeled a hipster” (ibid). The blog functions as her personal diary and creative outlet, and, by virtue of being online,

has allowed thousands to access the most intimate details of her private life that she is willing to share.

Yeh's artistic talents and quirky character shine through her blog. Its minimalist format lends itself to making it purely content-driven, with her photographs and text the sole objects of her audience's attention. Her writing style is informal and e.e. cummingsesque, eschewing the use of capitalization, "cause [it's] stupid. (and because sometimes i don't know what things to capitalize so by eliminating all possibilities, i can never be wrong.)" (ibid). This playful approach is replicated in Yeh's cooking, and she engages her viewers with innovative twists and creative photographs. Works of art in themselves, and purely relying on her words for context, they cater directly to the hungry, voyeuristic foodie. For her marzipan moose mousse cake, which was "inspired by a moose cookie cutter that i found at ikea, and [because]"moose mousse cake" is just so darn fun to say," Yeh presents a dessert in honor of her impending nuptials (*see fig. 39*)(ibid). Her witty repartee aside, the cake itself is masterpiece; adorned with two tan-colored moose and dusted by a snowy layer of sugar, she has created a affectionate wintry scene out of marzipan. Her attention to detail remains consistent throughout the post, with the cake resting on a layer of almond "ground" and carefully placed jars and pine boughs to complete her photographs.



fig. 39: Yeh's moose mousse cake

For a particularly impressive post, Yeh created a model of the Hagen farm out of gingerbread:



here is what our farm looks like! for the most part. it's not totally to scale and it's actually a vision of what the future will look like because there is a hot tub and a few ponies romping around, and with the exception of the pink tractor, it is all edible! there are za'atar trees and matcha trees and heart-shaped jolly rancher windows... even a shameless gingerbread buick lesabre.

i spent more hours than i'm willing to admit on this, and if i had a dollar for every time eggboy conveyed that i was a lunatic in the process, i'd have enough to buy a real pony, but it was 100% worth every second just to see the looks on all of the eggs' faces when they saw it. eggboy's lucky that i didn't set this in the middle of our living room and scatter coconut flakes all over the floor to represent the wheat fields and sugar beet fields. i will save that for next year.

i'd like it to be known that i did not throw one frustration-induced tantrum during this whole process. that's probably a given because technically i am a grown-up, but i've got an awful track record (which in past years has resulted in having to construct a house of cardboard and glue through a sea of tears), so i am very proud of myself for this.

do you want to have a tantrum-free gingerbread house building experience? i have secrets for you over on food52! follow along this week with a series of three gingerbread house posts that cover: how to make rock hard walls that won't collapse, how to make icing that will dry like cement, and how to make fun little accessories like a blue raspberry hot tub and cylindrical pieces of gingerbread wall for a grain bin or silo. and you'll get a little tour of our farm in the process :)

go check it out!

fig. 40: Yeh's edible interpretation of the Hagen family farm

Yeh proves to be a master at subtle self-promotion; she sneaks in a link to recipes on an external website, Food52, to which she is a regular contributor, as well as reposts photographs of her gingerbread masterpiece on Instagram to attract a more mainstream audience to her blog. Yeh's energy and attention to detail, in addition to the regularity with which she updates her various social media accounts, demonstrates commitment to cooking and to her viewers. The craftsmanship and care in her work is impressive in every context, and by tailoring it for various media platforms she is able to satisfy a diverse viewership.

While Yeh's success is attributed to her skill at visual self-representation, her video presence is almost exclusively limited to recordings of xylophone performances for PBS's "From the Top: At Carnegie Hall" series. The only piece that she has filmed in connection with her blog is "A New Cook in the Kitchen," a journalistic segment produced by *The New York Times*. The video presents Yeh as an example of the contemporary home cook, and chronicles her transition from urban hipster to rural domestic. The focus of this piece is Yeh's path to becoming a Hagen; much as Yeh was instructed on how to make *lefse*, a potato-based Scandinavian flatbread, she will in turn pass on her skills to her audience in a seven-minute video.



fig. 41: Lefse

The clip begins with a montage of shots of the Hagen family farm in Grand Forks, North Dakota (*see fig. 42*). The images of farm equipment and fields provide a stark contrast to the city she left behind, as well as the settings to which the audience is the most likely accustomed. Yeh is introduced through a clip of her smiling awkwardly at the camera; in a voiceover, Sam Sifton, the editor of *The New York Times's* food and dining sections, provides background information.

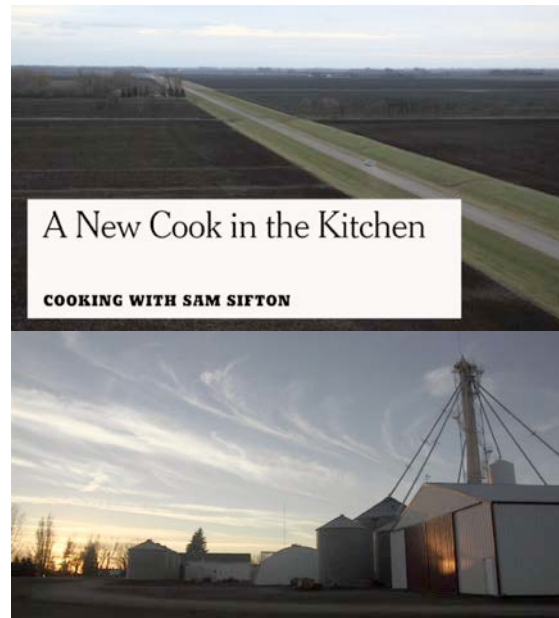


fig. 42: Shots of Grand Forks, North Dakota

Amidst a field of potatoes, Sifton calls Yeh his “lefse guru,” a moniker that she is uncomfortable with. With potatoes in hand, she abashedly admits that she had only heard of lefse in the last year and goes on to describe it. Supplemented by shots of elderly Scandinavian-American women making lefse, Yeh likens it to crepes that are traditionally made by these individuals. The video transitions to the kitchen, where Yeh and Sifton are already at work peeling the potatoes (*see fig. 43*). Skipping



fig. 43: Close-up of Yeh and Sifton peeling potatoes

over the majority of the preparations, they are peeled and cooked in several seconds; all the while, Yeh is focused on her work, unable to make eye contact with Sifton or the camera. Even though she has previous experience being the

center of attention from her former music career, it is clear that she is nervous from her shaking hands and anxious laugh. She feeds the potatoes into a ricer, which Sifton likens to a “giant garlic press,” to which they add undisclosed amounts of evaporated milk, oil, salt, sugar (see fig. 44). The dough is then refrigerated overnight, and Yeh has prepared an extra batch ahead of time for the sake of video production. Next, flour is incorporated and the lefse is left to rest.



fig. 44: Yeh feeding potatoes into a ricer

For the next step, Yeh brings in her “new cousin Elaine, who is an expert at lefse making,” and Elaine’s mother, Ethel (see fig. 45). Once in the kitchen, Ethel takes charge while Yeh and Sifton watch from a respectful distance. Her technique is flawless after half a century of practice; she effortlessly rolls out the thin circles of dough and pries them off the counter with a ruler-sized piece of wood, carefully



fig 45: Ethel with her family’s lefse recipe

laying them onto the special lefse-cooking grill. Ethel does so without speaking, silently smiling to herself when Sifton praises the end result.

Next, Yeh tries her hand at cooking the lefse (*see figs. 46a-d*). Her anxiety from this multi-sided scrutiny is obvious to the viewer, the pressure of trying to impress both her audience and generations of her future family in full effect. She asks for Ethel's opinion on her dough, to which she replies that it "feels sticky." After adding more flour and rolling out her lefse, Yeh is unable to coax her bread off of the counter, clearly not possessing Child's "courage of [her] convictions." "I've got time before the wedding," she jokes, as her lefse tears apart. She then reminisces with Ethel about her first lefse-making experience: "Do you remember when I made lefse for the first time, and I called you in near tears? This was last year, when I made it with sweet potatoes." Ethel responds: "With sweet potatoes?! That's different."



fig. 46a: Elaine, Ethel, and Sifton judge Yeh's technique



fig. 46b: Yeh concentrates on her lefse



fig. 46c: Yeh tackles the lefse transportation process



fig. 46d: Yeh successfully laying the lefse on the grill

Determined to make up for her previous failure, Yeh aims to make a lefse the size of the grill. Referring to Ethel's instructions, she uses the stick to carefully transport and unfold the dough, and is successful. "Well done!" Ethel praises her. Yeh asks, half-joking, "Am I ready to be part of this family?" After the ritual of tasting and voicing of satisfaction, Yeh brings the video to a close: "making lefse is just a great way to spend time with each other... that's been my favorite part about learning about lefse, is learning about it from Nick's family, and getting to know them through making lefse."



fig. 47: From left to right, Elaine, Yeh, and Ethel

Yeh has traded the glamour of the metropolis for overalls and some of the most nutrient-rich soil in the United States, and she appears to be content with that. She made the active choice to move to the Midwest, and has established her own brand through mynameisyeh. She is a noteworthy example of the looser definition of celebrity in new media, and has profited from it as well. As evidenced by her blog,

she is regularly invited to travel to retreats and workshops around the country, has started a made-to-order dessert business, and is leading a culinary Birthright trip to Israel in the summer of 2015.

External media further cements Yeh's popularity; from freelancing for food media outlets to interviews featured on Yahoo and in other international publications, she has established herself as a self-made celebrity. The version of Molly Yeh that is presented to viewers is carefree and fun-loving, characteristics that her readers desperately want to emulate. As is the tendency for lifestyle blogs, mynameisyeh instructs readers how better to live their lives. Yeh's convincing portrayal of domestic agrarian bliss has successfully captivated her audience; for the series "I Like This Bitch's Life," *New York Magazine* reviewed Yeh's work: "lifestyle blogs are all about aspiration, which is code for making people envy your work and shop accordingly... [in Yeh's case, we] bitterly admit that it's working." A life filled with love, crafting, and dessert seems perfect and easy, and her audience does not feel guilty about wanting what she appears to have.

The challenges that Yeh faces only contribute to her appeal, for they seem to belong to a different age: giving up a promising career for the sake of love, having to adapt to life on a farm, learning the traditions of her new family. The way that she approaches them is the key to her widespread appeal. She consistently radiates enthusiasm and joy across media platforms, and at no point addresses the difficulties in adapting to her new life, or any misgivings about having to do so. Similar to Drummond, Yeh has embraced her status as a farmer's wife, but her approach proves to be much more endearing and progressive. Whereas Drummond

is confined to flowing V-necks and the kitchen of her ranch house, Yeh immerses herself in farm life and has shaped her own identity, independent from the control that broadcast media inflicts on women.

Section Three: The New Chef - Christina Tosi



fig. 48: Christina Tosi in the Momofuku Milk Bar kitchen

Chef Christina Tosi began her career as an office assistant for David Chang's Momofuku restaurant group, where her baking talents were recognized after bringing in baked goods for her coworkers (Sherman 2014). Fortuitously, Chang was seeking to incorporate desserts into his already flourishing empire, and thus his partnership with the French Culinary Institute graduate was born; in the words of Miranda Purves for *ELLE*, "it became clear that she was the sweets visionary equal to his savory savant" (2009). Bolstered by the fame and prestige surrounding the Momofuku brand, Tosi has achieved success as the founder, owner, and chef of Momofuku Milk Bar, which *Bon Appetit* has dubbed "one of the most exciting bakeries in the country" (Momofuku Milk Bar). Since the opening of Milk Bar in

2008, Tosi has been awarded the title of 2012 James Beard Rising Star Chef of the Year, as well as was named a finalist for the Outstanding Pastry James Beard Award in 2014 (ibid).

Similar to Yeh, Tosi has garnered mass recognition through her innovative interpretation of how women should cook. Both approach the kitchen as a space for play and self-expression, with Tosi testing the fluidity of her “chef” status. Tosi’s primary concerns are pleasure and indulgence, with the glucose amounts directly correlating with the popularity of the end result. She draws inspiration from childhood nostalgia, with sentiment more important than aesthetics; her baked goods are mainly based on her mother and grandmother’s recipes, and are therefore more focused on taste and excess than physical appearance (Witchel 2011). She plays with classics, chiefly cookies, pies, and soft-serve, and revamps them with innovative twists derived from her professional knowledge. Contrary to Child’s core beliefs, Tosi leans heavily on the shifting definition of cooking “from scratch,” using premade foods in her baking out of convenience. Snyder’s™ pretzels go into her Compost Cookie®, strawberry ice cream purchased from the local bodega is a key component in her Corn Cookie Pie®, and copious amounts of Kellogg’s™ products feature in her signature Cereal Milk® series (Momofuku Milk Bar). To quantify her unorthodox style, she refers to herself as “a home baker meets someone who went to culinary school”; Tosi does not fit within the generic chef mold, and is proud of that fact (Witchel 2011).

Momofuku Milk Bar’s Birthday Layer Cake, one of the bakery’s most popular items, is a token example of Tosi’s signature style. She has taken the traditional

funfetti cake and created a much more intricate and involved product. Her creation requires exponentially more than a standard Betty Crocker mix; the Birthday Cake is comprised of four sub-recipes, one each for the cake, frosting, cake soak, and cake crumb (Tosi 2011). The recipes themselves are overwhelming; they require an impressive thirty-one ingredients and “special equipment” – a silpat mat, a nonstandard six-inch cake ring, and acetate (a flexible plastic paper) (ibid).



fig. 49: Tosi's Birthday Layer Cake

In addition to the monetary commitment associated with making the cake, it requires a certain amount of time, making it less of a dessert to recreate at home and more of one to buy and worship. Tosi recommends extending the process over five days, with the finished product contradicting the precision and sacrifice that the cake demands (ibid). Breaking with the perfectionism traditionally associated with the chef, Tosi leaves the sides of her multi-tiered cake un-iced, exposing its layers. This decision that goes against the conventional rules of pastry; it is purposefully imperfect while simultaneously complex, which makes the cake accessible to both foodie and general consumers alike.

The combination of whimsy and seriousness emulates Tosi's personality, which proves to be a winning mixture in wider media. Tosi and her desserts lend

themselves well to camera angles, and have increasingly become fixtures in the food discourse. To support her partner, David Chang, she appears in “Sweet Spot,” the thirteenth episode of PBS’s *The Mind of a Chef* (2012-). As she is introduced in Anthony Bourdain’s voiceover, no flattery is spared: “The dessert wizard in Chang’s world is Chef Christina Tosi; she’s part owner of Momofuku Milk Bar and a genius when it comes to sweets.” Although not shown together, Chang and Tosi complement each other; both are awkward and shy, and clearly not meant to appear on television screens. Even though Chang and Tosi are professionals, they can be taken out of their elements and humanized. This presentation of their characters, evocative of Child’s demeanor in the kitchen, makes them all the more endearing.

For this episode, Tosi shares her secrets for her Corn Cookie® and Arnold Palmer Layer Cake®.¹ She launches into her introductory spiel: “we’re about to mix the corn



fig. 50: Tosi’s introduction in *The Mind of a Chef*

cookie. It’s the Milk Bar sleeper cookie; anyone that gets a corn cookie always comes back.” Her voice is high-pitched and nervous, with a slight southern twang, alluding to her Virginian roots. Much more reserved than Yeh and her televisual contemporaries, Tosi is uncomfortable in front of the camera; shy and soft-spoken, her appearances in video clips are out of necessity for promoting both Milk Bar and herself. However, her cooking style contradicts her personality, and once the focus

¹ Tosi primarily works in the medium of sweets, and has therefore not publicly released recipes that use potatoes; as a fellow starch, corn is the closest substitute.

is directed away from her and onto her skills, Tosi asserts her knowledge and control.

To start her cookie, she combines the butter, sugar, and eggs in her standing mixer. The key to the cookie's consistency, she informs her audience, is the "ten-minute creaming process," which incorporates air bubbles into the mixture. For this simple-seeming process, Tosi has perfected the technique to achieve the desired result; even for mass-cookie production, she is determined to create a quality product. Next, Tosi introduces the secret ingredient: freeze dried corn powder. She incorporates an undisclosed amount into the batter before using an ice cream scoop



fig. 51: The finished Corn Cookies®

to create perfectly rounded cookies, and carefully places them equidistant on a baking sheet before sliding them into her industrial oven. Eight minutes later, the cookies are baked to her liking (*see fig. 51*).

Clips of farmer's markets and other professional chefs preparing sweets with Chang interrupt Tosi's segment. The other desserts are overly technical, including perching soymilk sorbet and orange blossom foam on basil leaves, and while visually attractive, are unable to be replicated by the at-home audience. In contrast, Tosi's are hearty and markedly less elitist, appealing more to the average viewer in both preparation and flavor profile.

For her final segment, Tosi presents a twist on her layer-cake formula inspired by Arnold Palmer. Replicating the process of making the Birthday Cake, Tosi and her “esteemed colleague,” Courtney McBroom, prepare the layers of lemon teacake, lemon mascarpone, almond tea crunch, and Arnold Palmer jelly that they will use in their creation. The dynamic between the two provides an interesting companion to Tosi’s work as an individual. While Chang collaborates with chefs of comparable caliber, he does not require the aid of a sous chef. Tosi, on the other hand, who had managed to bake her cookies without assistance, apparently needed an extra set of hands for this endeavor. She is clearly in charge, leaving the menial tasks of brewing tea and mixing the lemon curd to McBroom, the latter’s presence is unnecessary. In contrast to the hierarchical tension in the male kitchen, Druckman posits that women prefer to work together; while Tosi is capable of completing the task on her own, she is relishing the company, as well as the distraction from the camera (*see fig. 52*)(2010). McBroom, wearing a matching headband and apron,



fig. 52: Left to right, Tosi and McBroom

keeps the mood lighthearted with her jokes; “it’s tea time,” she says, cuing raucous laughter from Tosi. Most often, though, her humor goes unrecognized, as Tosi is hyper-focused on the task at hand.

Once the components have been prepared, the two begin to build the Arnold Palmer cake. Using the six-inch ring, Tosi cuts two circles out of the sheet cake, and uses the remaining scraps to form the bottom “junky, put together layer;” in the spirit of Child, she says, “no one will ever know!” After the cake has been pressed together, the bitter tea soak is painted on, followed by the lemon mascarpone, almond tea crunch, and tea jelly. The process repeats twice more. Conscious of the time and attention that it consumes, Tosi says, “You think it should be fussy, but it’s not fussy – it’s fun,” which is followed by a quip from McBroom: “it’s a real hole in one, this cake!”



fig. 53: Close-up of the Arnold Palmer Layer Cake®

“Sweet Spot” was released in 2012, and in the years since, Tosi’s mediated persona has grown along with her confidence. In a video for *VICE*, Tosi walks viewers through her day, beginning with Dairy Queen blizzards and ending with beers in the parking lot of a mini-golf range (“Munchies: Christina Tosi”). She appears in a segment for Jimmy Fallon’s *Late Night*, constructing a sandwich out of Spaghetti-Os®, Jimmy Dean™ Breakfast Sausage®, microwaved soft-boiled egg, Aunt Jemima™ maple syrup, potato chips, and prepackaged potato bread (“Late

Night Eats: Christina Tosi's Late Night Sandwich"). To promote her new cookie line with supermodel Karlie Kloss, the two prance around in 80s workout gear and giggle shamelessly (*see fig. 54*)(LuckyPeachTV, "The Perfect 10 Workout with Karlie Kloss").

Tosi's celebrity presence extends far beyond the televisual. A Google search for Tosi yields almost half a million results: her personal social media accounts, books on Amazon, and interviews with *New York Times Magazine* and *Elle*. She is no longer just a chef: she is an entrepreneur, role model, and fashion icon. She embodies the ideals of every consumer: passion, success, and the inability to gain weight, made evident by the articles that range from, "The Secrets of a Skinny (Pastry) Chef: The Woman Behind Momofuku's Sweet Treats Spill" and "Momofuku's Christina Tosi Rolling Out Pop-up Food Truck."



fig. 54: Kloss and Tosi in "The Perfect 10 Workout with Karlie Kloss"



fig. 55: *Refinery29* lauds Tosi as a "Fearless, Game-Changing Lad[y] Who Majorly Inspire[s]"

Like Yeh, Christina Tosi has found fame in the manipulation of ideals. From pioneering techniques of cookie making to reframing the relationship between the professional chef and the kitchen, she has earned her celebrity status. While she appears to have been able to escape the broadcast media-inflicted fate of Burrell until now, Tosi's recent appointment as judge on the popular competitive cooking show, *MasterChef Junior*, presents an interesting test. Will she be able to retain her sense of self and unique flair, or will she be overshadowed by the exaggerated personas of Gordon Ramsay and Graham Elliot and molded into a more mainstream image? Will she be presented as their equals, or by virtue of her gender be pushed in the direction of the cook? According to Tosi, she sees working with men as a "challenge" and an opportunity for "changing the dialogue and using it as motivation rather than trepidation or fear" (*Glamour* 2014). If women have made significant progress in the kitchen, the fourth season of *MasterChef Junior* will be a way to gauge this.



fig. 56: Tosi announces her *MasterChef Junior* judge appointment on Twitter

Conclusion: **Moving Towards Gender Equality in Food Media**

Women must conceive of themselves as potentially, if not actually, equal subjects, and must be willing to look the facts of their situation full in the face, without self-pity or cop-outs; at the same time, they must view their situation with that high degree of emotional and intellectual commitment necessary to create a world in which equal achievement will be not only made possible but actively encouraged by social institutions.

- Linda Nochlin
(Druckman 2010)

The physical act of cooking has long been affected by its relegation as “women’s work.” Handicapped by this antiquated notion, food has evolved as a thoroughly gendered medium; while men engage with it out of interest, women do so out of necessity. Furthermore, this tension between cooking as a leisure activity versus a duty has persisted in the media, which has proven to exert both positive and negative influences on the issue. If the levels of food media consumption paralleled culinary mastery, then hundreds of thousands would be on par with professional chefs whom they idolize. In an era when individuals are increasingly defined by their choices, the consumption of food in all of its forms has emerged as a primary means with which to do so. Indeed, culinary celebrities continue to rise in popularity as the boundaries separating domestic and public spheres become increasingly blurred.

The foodie identity, which was previously reserved for the upper classes, has been made accessible to society at large through the mainstreaming of *haute cuisine*, a phenomenon that was initially sparked by *The French Chef*. Through the

simplification of the highfalutin titular cuisine, Julia Child updated the stereotypical role of the domestic housewife. She introduced cooking for the sake of pleasure into culinary discourse and instilled her viewers with confidence by heartily welcoming them into her kitchen. Additionally, her seamless combination of the cook and chef qualities, in conjunction with her approachable and quirky persona, subverted gender norms of the 1960s.

Child established a celebrity-chef standard that has been consistently imitated in the decades following the conclusion of *The French Chef*. Aside from an innate ability to charm the camera, a defined set of characteristics, including charisma, passion, and relatability, are key components in creating a successful persona. This formula has been thoroughly replicated by the Food Network, and the mass appeal of its culinary cast has been a direct contributor to its longevity. However, the channel has been unable to adequately preserve Child's well roundedness, and the cook and chef tropes have once again regained their gendered relationship.

As archetypal examples of these respective types, Ree Drummond and Anne Burrell have achieved the maximum level of fame that network television can afford. Despite their different backgrounds, they have successfully made cooking into their livelihoods, and continue to profit from their skills in the kitchen and self-promotion. However, television alone proves too dated a medium to cater to the demands of both audiences and alleviating gender inequalities; digital media has allowed women to negotiate their agency in new, non-corporate ways, and has provided a platform for them to function on more individual levels. Molly Yeh's and

Christina Tosi's flourishing careers are testaments to the gradually changing attitudes surrounding the relationship between women and the kitchen, and are indicative of the overall importance of medium specificity in diminishing these gender divides.

Regardless of whether they are situated in the televisual or the filmic kitchen, or in the domestic or the professional kitchens of reality, women are still primarily portrayed and perceived as cooks. There is no lack of female chefs on broadcast media; the ways and the quality with which they are being packaged and presented remains the primary issue. As aptly stated by Druckman, women "remain isolated and pigeonholed by the media, by culinary institutions, and sometimes even by their male peers" (2010). However, as demonstrated in this analysis of the ever-changing food media environment, women have been able to approach their situations with enthusiasm. Moreover, their presences have been instrumental in shaping the culinary discourse to favor gender equality. Much as these celebrities are a part of a continuum, the media landscape is continually evolving, and, together, equilibrium will be reached that satisfies decades of gender imbalance in the kitchen. In the words of Julia Child, "*Courage, and bon appétit!*"

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